



**Tools for
Comprehensive School Health Programs:**

*Starting a
School-Community
Health and Safety Council*



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services

Tools for Comprehensive School Health Programs: Starting a School-Community Health and Safety Council



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This publication is available from:

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<http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dlsea/sspw/pdf/health&safety.pdf>

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June 2000, July 2001

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Introduction

Collaboration: Mobilizing to Promote Healthy, Resilient, and Successful Learners

In order to ensure the health and academic success of our youth, all community members and institutions must be engaged in coordinated youth development, health promotion, and risk prevention efforts. Families, schools, health and social services professionals, justice personnel, community-based organizations, media, and others must work in concert to help guide our young on a successful life course. The missions and goals of these various community entities are often very similar. None of us can reach our goals alone. Therefore, communities need to develop the successful relationships and partnerships that are the foundations of effective collaboration. *Tools for Comprehensive School Health Programs: Starting a School-Community Health and Safety Council*, is a valuable resource that parents, schools, and community organizations can use to improve the health and academic success of youth in their community.

Tools for Comprehensive School Health Programs: Starting a School-Community Health and Safety Council offers recommended first steps in organizing and gaining support for health and safety councils. The formation and implementation of health and safety councils is a cutting edge strategy to help address health and safety concerns of young people in the school district and community. A successful council brings many players to the table to improve the health and safety of students. The tips offered in *Tools for Comprehensive School Health Programs: Starting a School-Community Health and Safety Council* provide important initial steps in the planning and development of a health and safety council.



Acknowledgements

The materials in this document serve as a series of checklists and appendices for use by school and community personnel when engaging in collaborative projects related to Comprehensive School Health Programs and youth health and safety initiatives. Through the efforts of individuals representing the Wisconsin *Department of Public Instruction* and the *Department of Health and Family Services*, we have put this document together keeping in mind both concise *form* and easy to use *function*. As a workgroup, the members of these agencies hope this document assists you in building future partnerships.

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Starting a School-Community Health and Safety Council

Narrative

What is a School-Community Health and Safety Council?

A School-Community Health and Safety Council (SCHSC) is an advisory group representing various segments of the school and community. Membership can be recruited from many sectors, representing the diversity of the community and several key community sectors. These include, but are not limited to: school administrators and program coordinators, pupil service personnel, parents, pupils, students, health professionals, social services professionals, justice system personnel, school food service staff, school board members, local business leaders, community-based organizations, and any other groups interested in the health and academic success of youth. An advisory council provides recommendations to a school district on health and safety policies, programs, and activities that impact schools. These health and safety issues include but are not limited to:

- ♦ Developing school and community safety and emergency response plans;
- ♦ Coordinating health and youth services including access to health care, nursing, counseling, social work, and psychological services;
- ♦ Identifying alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse (ATODA) prevention activities;
- ♦ Approving human growth and development curricula and programs;
- ♦ Reviewing nutrition and physical activity efforts;
- ♦ Assuring healthy environments; and
- ♦ Approving health education curricula and programs.

Why do we need a School-Community Health and Safety Council?

While a school's primary mission is educating children, children cannot learn effectively without the foundations of health and safety. A Health and Safety Council provides support for student achievement by facilitating communication, coordination, and monitoring of youth health and safety activities in your community and school. The Health and Safety Council provides:

- ♦ An organizational structure for reducing duplication of activities through coordination of existing committees or councils related to health and safety issues in your school or community;
- ♦ A single access point for the district for community-school collaborations around health and safety issues;
- ♦ A venue for presenting information and data on priority youth health issues to school and community youth health and safety advocates;

- ◆ An entity for health and safety survey oversight and information gathering;
- ◆ A sounding board for school or community health and safety initiatives;
- ◆ A resource for financial and fundraising decisions that impact the health and safety of youth;
- ◆ An umbrella entity that offers guidance or feedback on school programs and policies such as ATODA, nutrition and food services, violence and harassment, human growth and development, positive youth development, citizenship and other priority topics; and
- ◆ An opportunity for ongoing planning and assessment of youth health and safety activities

The roles and responsibilities of a Health and Safety Council will vary depending on the needs and capacities of the schools and their communities. Comprehensive efforts to identify youth health issues, plan efforts to prevent and address those issues, and then monitor your success will assure improved health and academic success for all students.

The following checklist and narrative provides a step-by-step approach to establishing a School-Community Health and Safety Council in your district, school, or community. This checklist is not meant to be a comprehensive guide to maintaining a Council, simply a starting point. As you work, you will identify numerous resources and approaches to making the Health and Safety Council run effectively. The key to success is identifying those resources and processes that work for your community and school. The following steps will help secure a sound foundation for the Council and avoid many of the organizational pitfalls that can inhibit new collaborative initiatives.

How do we start a School-Community Health and Safety Council?

- ☐ Gather a small core team of school and community health advocates to determine the need for a Health and Safety Council

As you are probably aware, any lasting initiative needs to have one or more champions advocating for action. Health and Safety councils are no exception. The core team is first and foremost the catalyst for establishment of the Health and Safety Council. The core team could also eventually play a primary role in the management of Council activities. Ideally, the core team would have members from both school and community organizations. These members should have an understanding of health and safety initiatives, programs, or activities in both school and community venues. This core team should come together to evaluate the current levels of coordination and collaboration present in the community and schools. From this evaluation, the core team should assess the need for a Health and Safety Council. Once that need is established and the larger Health and Safety Council is established, the core team could act as a steering committee, although any roles beyond establishing the Council should take place with the input of the larger Health and Safety Council.

- ☐ From this core team, identify a lead or leads who will facilitate future planning meetings

From this core team, one or more individuals should commit to facilitating future meetings or activities of the core team. Establishing a lead is important because leadership by many can mean leadership by none. There needs to be identified, accountable people and/or organizations to take the lead in developing your school or community's Health and Safety

Council. The idea of co-leaders, with both school and community representation, is also recommended.

- ☐ The core team should identify existing health-related councils or committees in order to identify possible membership for the Health and Safety Council

It is important to recognize that schools have existing committees, councils, work groups, or organizational structures that address school health and safety issues. It should be a priority of the Health and Safety Council to coordinate, complement, and build on existing activities rather than compete with them. The first step in working with existing initiatives is identifying what already exists and reach out to those school groups for ideas, support and collaboration. While a core team will struggle identifying all school youth health groups and activities, a strong effort should be made to involve as many leaders as possible.

- ☐ The core team should prepare a brief proposal on the roles and responsibilities of the School Community Health and Safety Council that can be presented to community and school decision-makers. The roles and responsibilities proposal might include:

- ◆ Proposed authority of Health and Safety Council
- ◆ Planning and review roles, such as:
 - District-wide or school health and safety activity oversight (i.e. emergency response plan, citizenship plan, etc.)
 - Direct services coordination
 - Grant and budget planning
 - Evaluation, accountability, and quality control
 - Other
- ◆ Information sharing and advocacy roles such as:
 - District, school and community health information collection
 - Presentations on priority health topics
 - Survey oversight
 - Health promotion proposal oversight
 - Other
- ◆ Desired partner organizations or entities
- ◆ SCHSC meeting structure and schedule

Before people and organizations will support your efforts, they will need to have a blueprint of what the core team wants to do. The roles and responsibilities listed above provide a starting point for communicating your objectives. You might decide to adopt all of the roles listed above, only one or two, or come up with a list of entirely different roles and responsibilities. The list is meant as a starting place for defining the scope and activities of your School-Community Health and Safety Council. Each core team should propose the activities and structures they feel are most appropriate for their Council.

- ☐ Solicit and integrate feedback on the SCHSC proposal from the administrations of school and community partners and secure authorization for the Council

Once you have defined the council, the core team needs to assure that the school administration, school board, and primary community partners are engaged and supportive. There must be authorization and legitimization by the key decision-makers of school and

community partners in order for the Council's work to have an impact on the health and safety of children.

- ☐ Invite potential partners to an organizational meeting and present the SCHSC proposal

When the core team has identified the need, developed the roles and responsibilities, and secured authorization and support, essential partners should be invited to a meeting to discuss the SCHSC proposal. Core team members should include representatives from existing community and school initiatives identified earlier in the planning process. By the end of this meeting, core team members and identified leaders should solicit a commitment from attending organizations to participate on the Council. This first meeting would also be an optimal time to identify additional partners who should be at the table.

- ☐ Establish a final membership list, a recommended organizational structure, and official meeting schedule for the SCHSC

The member organizations should be given formal notification of their participation on the School Community Health and Safety Council. This formal notification should provide a recommended organizational structure, roles and responsibilities of the Council, expectations of membership, and a meeting schedule for the coming year. Decisions about organizational structure and meeting schedules should be defined by the core team based on the scope of the Council's roles and responsibilities.



Starting a School-Community Health and Safety Council

Summary Checklist

How do we start a School-Community Health and Safety Council (SCHSC)?

- ☐ Gather a small core team of school and community health advocates to determine the need for a SCHSC.
- ☐ From this core team, identify a lead or leads that will facilitate future planning meetings.
- ☐ The core team should identify existing health-related councils or committees in order to identify possible membership for the SCHSC.
- ☐ The core team should prepare a brief proposal on the roles and responsibilities of the SCHSC that can be presented to community and school decision-makers. The roles and responsibilities proposal might include:
 - ◆ Proposed authority of the SCHSC
 - ◆ Planning and review roles, such as:
 - District-wide or school health and safety activity oversight (i.e. emergency response plan, citizenship plan, etc.)
 - Direct services coordination
 - Grant and budget planning
 - Evaluation, accountability, and quality control
 - Other
 - ◆ Information sharing and advocacy roles such as:
 - District, school, and community health information collection
 - Presentations on priority health topics
 - Survey oversight
 - Health promotion proposal oversight
 - Other
 - ◆ Desired partner organizations or entities
 - ◆ SCHSC meeting structure and schedule
- ☐ Solicit and integrate feedback on the SCHSC proposal from the administrations of school and community partners and secure authorization for the council.
- ☐ Invite potential partners to an organizational meeting and present the SCHSC proposal.
- ☐ Establish a final membership list, a recommended organizational structure, and official meeting schedule for the SCHSC.



Appendix #1

Sample of a School-Community Health and Safety Council

**Eau Claire
School-Community Advisory Council
Contact: Ms. Sharon Gilles, District Health Education and AOD Prevention
Coordinator
(715) 833-3458**

Tips for Success:

1. The Eau Claire school-community advisory council was formed in 1994-95 and is in its sixth year of operation. The advisory council originated from the district's Human Growth and Development Advisory Committee.
2. Ms. Sharon Gilles started the council building process after serving on the State Superintendent's ATODA Advisory committee and working with DPI's Comprehensive School Health Programs framework. She went to her immediate supervisors in the curriculum and instruction and pupil services areas that supported the concept of an advisory council and recommended the type of members needed.
 - a. Members who could explore issues from multiple points of view.
 - b. Not a "yes" committee but a thoughtful, problem solving group that could review issues and provide direction.
 - c. A group that could reach reasoned consensus on health and safety issues.
3. Group make-up. Ms. Gilles looked for the following characteristics:
 - a. People who could look at issues from varying points of view.
Ex. PTA president could also give the perspective of being a parent (i.e. multiple hats)
 - b. People that were easy to work with and provided expertise on many health issues.
4. Each member was given a personal invitation and expectations were spelled out.

Total membership = 24 people

1. DHFS representative
2. 3 principals
3. Sharon Gilles, Health Education and AOD Prevention Coordinator
4. At-risk supervisor
5. Curriculum supervisor.
6. Early childhood representative.
7. Private non-profit health providers.
8. Youth ministers from two major religious groups.
9. Big Brothers /Big Sisters
10. Parents with children in the school district representative.
11. School nurse/ Community nurse.
12. PTA president.
13. Family preservation program representative (Resource Center).
14. Full time parent.
15. Sheriff's dept. rep. (County)
16. Captain in the police force.(City)
17. Police liaison to the schools.
18. School counselor
19. Project coordinator: Coalition of youth (23 collaborating agencies that do youth work in Eau Claire.)
20. School board member.
21. Private school representative.

It is important to consider the political factors that are in the community to consider all of the key members of the council.

This committee is school board sanctioned and supported.

Issues that are covered in the meetings during the first three years:

1. Grant related issues/should we apply for grants.
2. Review the best case scenarios related to discussions that are discussed. (ex. Advantages or disadvantages of a packaged curriculum over district developed curriculum.)
3. Human Growth and Development
4. Surveys that are conducted in the school (First group to review results)
5. Goal setting and long term planning.
6. Safe and healthy schools.

The council meets twice a year for three hours except when emergency meetings are needed.

A typical meeting consists of the following:

1. An educational piece. (What is going on Healthwise in Eau Claire).
2. An update piece. (What is new and exciting in Eau Claire).
3. Action items with background information and the action that needs to be addressed.
4. Planning (it is important that the members feel they meet for a purpose).
Sometimes, though rarely subcommittees are needed.

The advantage of this committee is their ability to reach the community because of the makeup of the group.

Key questions:

1. How do issues get to the council?

Concerns may go to the supervisors or any council member for that matter and then reach the chairperson of the council to get on the agenda. The council chair may decide to get an issue on the agenda based on a concern. Some issues are brought up at the meeting and the chair decides if the issue can be dealt with at the meeting or should be tabled with information being distributed to members. In the early stages of the council process Sharon Gilles brought a lot of items to the council meetings. Now the council members bring issues to the meetings.

2. How do issues ultimately get to the board of education?

To have a board member on the committee who can take the council's recommendations directly to the board is definitely advantageous. Also, this person can assist in the decision of what council activities should be taken to the school board. If it is a policy decision or a major change in procedure the final decision rests with the board. The council can deal with minor decisions during the meeting.

3. Are subcommittees sometimes needed when dealing with certain issues?

When there are large issues to be addressed subcommittees are formed based on background and expertise. Assignment to a subcommittee is determined by ability to address the problem at hand. It is kept to a minimum.



Appendix #2

Invitation Letter and Council Overview

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am writing you to invite your participation on the Hometown Community-School Health and Safety Council. The attached overview provides insight into the goals and objectives, roles and responsibilities of the Health and Safety Council. The Council has support from the Hometown School District, the Hometown Hospital, and the Hometown Health Department, and we are hoping we can add your important voice to the Council.

You have been chosen because of your commitment to the health, safety, and success of Hometown's children. By your participation, we hope to take advantage of your invaluable experience and knowledge of how to get things done in Hometown. Your work and relationships with (health care provider, school district, youth-serving organizations, faith community, public health, etc) provides the insight and leadership necessary to most effectively impact the health of children throughout the community.

We hope you are able to participate in our quarterly meetings. These meetings will provide an opportunity to review district/school policies and programs related to youth health and safety issues. For example, we will annually review the Human Growth and Development Curriculum used in our schools to assure that it reflects the objectives and values of the community. In addition, we will be working with local dentists and dental hygienists to place and promote dental sealants and oral health through the Seal Hometown initiative. These two examples demonstrate the breadth of what the Health and Safety Council will be doing. Your input will help assure that we maximize our school and community resources to improve the health and academic success of our children.

Thanks for your consideration. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I will be contacting you in the next few days to discuss your interest in participating on Hometown's Health and Safety Council.

Sincerely,



Appendix #3

Hometown Health and Safety Council

Overview

Proposed Authority of Health and Safety Council

In Hometown, the Health and Safety Council will act as an advisory committee to the Hometown School District and the Hometown Youth Health Initiative. The Hometown School Board, the Hometown Hospital, and the Hometown Health Department have all agreed to designate the Health and Safety Council as the city's primary planning, information, and advocacy group for youth health and safety initiatives.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Health and Safety Council will provide guidance for the district/school in each of the following areas and activities:

Program, Curriculum and Policy Development:

- Review and provide feedback on the Human Growth and Development Curriculum
- Review and provide feedback on the Citizenship Initiative
- Establish a City Policy on the Enforcement of Youth Tobacco Ordinances
- Listen to and evaluate new program or policy proposals on emerging youth health

Service Coordination:

- Oversee the coordination of the "Seal Hometown" Oral Health Initiative
- Review and provide feedback on the Mental Health Services Coordination plan, the School Nursing plan, and the Community Health Center "Healthy Kids" plan

Grant and Budget Planning:

- Review and provide feedback on budget items related to youth health issues

Evaluation, Accountability, and Quality Control:

- Review presentations on youth health status, risk behaviors, and assets of Hometown youth
- Evaluate the impact of curricula, programs and policies related to youth health in the community and schools, particularly the HGD curriculum, Seal Hometown initiative, and the Mental Health plan

Desired Partner Organizations or Entities

A list of other individuals and organizations invited to join the Health and Safety Council is included for your reference.

SCHSC Meeting Structure and Schedule

The Health and Safety Council will have quarterly meetings at the Hometown Community Center.



Appendix #4

Use of State of Wisconsin Statutes by Health and Safety Councils

*Use of the Statute Reference Listing of the
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Student Services/Prevention and Wellness Team
with the State of Wisconsin Legislature's
statute website:*

Connect on the internet with the following website:

URL: www.legis.wi.us/rsb/stats.html

When you get to that web site type in the state statute number you are interested in and it will appear on the screen.

Ex.118.019 will get the Human Growth and Development statute.

The key chapters related to school law are chapters 48, 115, 118, 120, and 121. A school health council can access these statutes to help provide assistance with issues they may be addressing, provide background in local policy development, and keep updated on statute changes. In addition, the Department of Public Instruction will provide technical assistance on statute interpretation as part of its activities.

